

Now & Then in Ripon ... *Looking back with the Ripon Historical Society*

Former Ripon pastor patented steam fire-proof safe

This is the third article in a series documenting inventions by Ripon residents that were approved by the U.S. Patent Office in Washington, D.C.

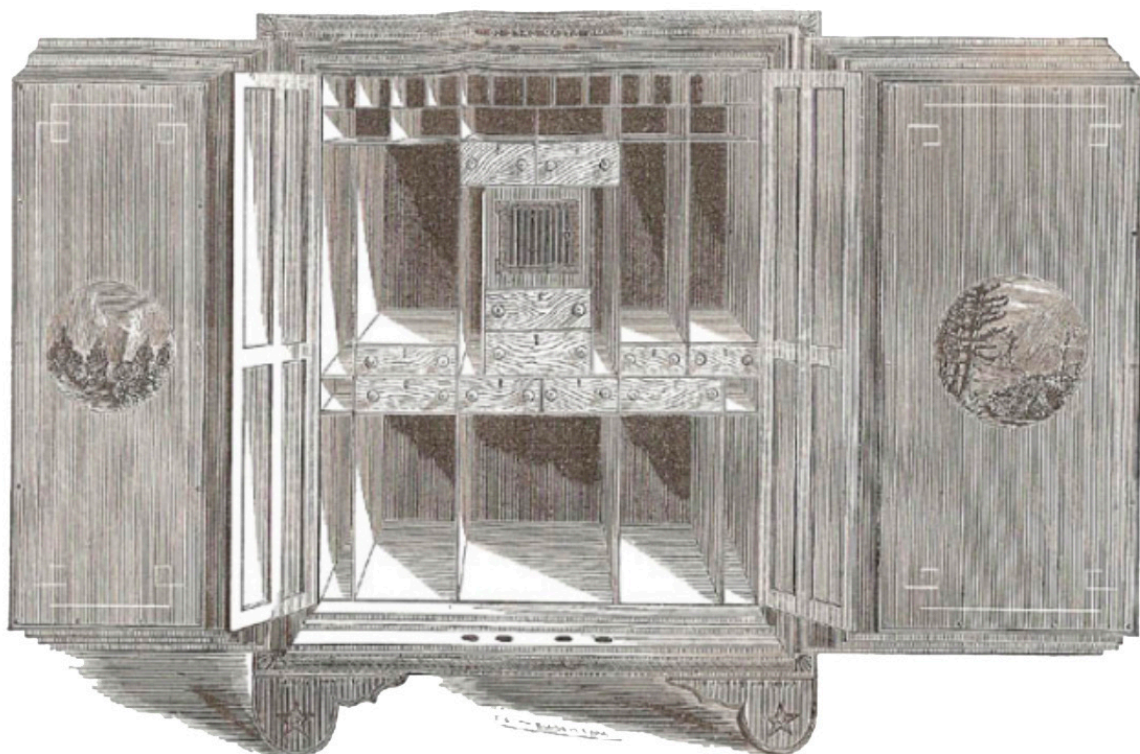
Riponites who applied for patents were not just inventors. Most owned and operated businesses for their everyday income.

Rufus S. Sanborn (1820-1877) was born in Massachusetts and lived in Vermont before arriving in Ripon to organize and become the pastor of the First Universalist Church in March 1863.

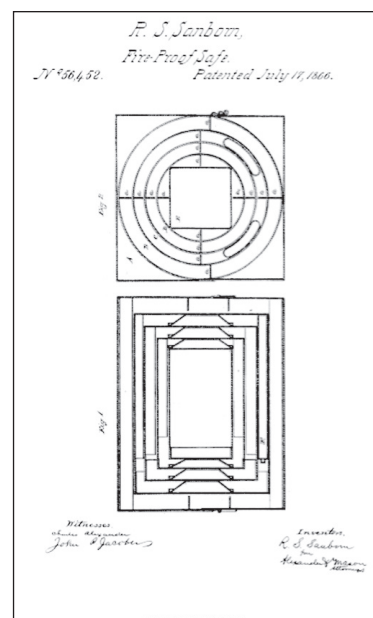
Although the Ripon Historical Society does not know specifically where Sanborn, along with his wife, Emily, and four children lived, it was listed as dwelling No. 61 in early Ripon.

Sanborn was advised by Ripon resident and former Wisconsin Territorial Gov. John Scott Horner (1802-1883) where to build the church.

At that time, Horner owned a large square of land which became the commercial district of Ripon. Sanborn established the Universalist Church where Ripon Community Church



AN ADVERTISING RENDERING shows the double-door version of Sanborn's Steam Fire-Proof Safe. *submitted photo*



THIS DRAWING of the fireproof safe was included in Rufus S. Sanborn's application to the United States Patent Office. *submitted photo*

His invention included an inner lining of concentric circles made of metal technically described as air spaces, that also could hold containers of water that is heated during a potential fire, would turn to steam and preserve whatever was inside the safe from burning.

The descriptor for the concept, design, testing via actual fires and eventual manufactured product is listed as a "fireproof safe."

The patent submission is witnessed and signed by then Riponites E.B. Pride (1821-1889), a 20-year justice of the peace, and A.C. Nye (1894-1919), a farmer.

The Ripon Historical Society is the oldest continually operating historical society in Wisconsin. It is open Fridays and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For more information follow it at Facebook/riponhistory or www.riponhistory.org.

THE STEAM FIRE-PROOF SAFE,
SANBORN'S PATENT.
THE BEST SAFE IN THE WORLD
PERFECTLY DRY IN USE—ACTUALLY FIRE-PROOF.

It has been more severely tried than any other, and never failed.

The special excellence of this Safe consists in a lining of copper vessels containing water between the bookcase and the walls, whereby, in case of fire, steam is generated, which carries out the heat as it comes in; and thus protects the contents through the longest and severest fires that ever occur. It is thoroughly made, and furnished with the best burglar-proof lock.

The vessels are sealed, so that the water cannot evaporate to dampen the Safe. The solder that closes the opening



melts below boiling heat, to let off the steam. "Return Pipes" prevent the water from escaping, in case the Safe overturns when burning. It is entirely dry in use; never needs a new supply of water; is very strong, and will resist several times as much fire as ordinary Safes.

All persons needing Fire-proof Safes should send for a pamphlet, and learn all about the STEAM SAFE, before purchasing.

Perfectly satisfactory information furnished to all inquirers.

OVER EIGHTY SAFES FAILED IN ONE FIRE IN PORTLAND.
MORE OR LESS OF THE ORDINARY SAFES FAIL IN NEARLY EVERY SEVERE FIRE.
THE STEAM SAFE NEVER FAILED.
No Valuables Entrusted to it were ever Lost.

WHAT IS SAID OF IT.

"The fire-proof quality of the Steam Improvement is established beyond question; and since so many safes, in recent great fires, have failed to preserve their contents, an improvement like this must be welcomed with great satisfaction."—*Boston Daily Advertiser*.

"An absolutely FIRE-PROOF Safe is at last before the public."—*Philadelphia Press*, Sept. 21, 1867.

"The trial of Steam Fire-Proof Safes, at the Inter-State Fair, gave the greatest possible satisfaction, and further demonstrated their superiority over all others. They are being fully appreciated now by our mercantile community, and we take great pleasure in calling attention to them."—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sept. 20, 1867.

"Sanborn's invention has been proved by the most satisfactory tests to be exactly what its manufacturers represent."—*Portland Daily Press*, March 3, 1868.

"These safes are rapidly superseding every other kind, and in their improved form are superior to every other."—*Boston Daily Evening Traveller*.

Manufactured and Sold by
AMERICAN STEAM FIRE-PROOF SAFE COMPANY.
NEW YORK, 300 Broadway.
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AN ADVERTISEMENT CALLS Rufus S. Sanborn's Steam Fire-Proof safe "The Best Safe in the World." *submitted photo*



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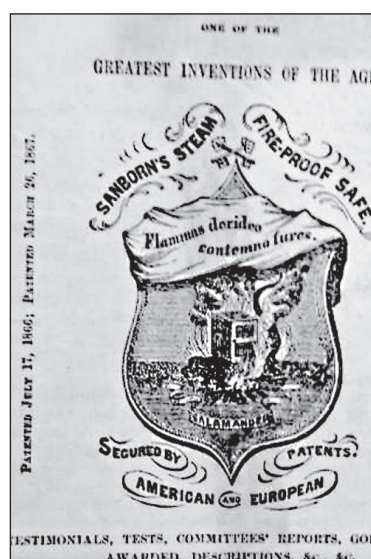
Ripon Building Commission.

On Feb. 28, 1867, Sanborn resigned as pastor of the church he established. This was due to the fact that he wanted to change the name of the church from "Universalist" to become "Unitarian" church without seeking others' input.

His resignation was unanimously accepted with a statement that "we are satisfied that Mr. Sanborn has done as much as any man could have done in building up a liberal society and also building our beautiful church edifice, with resolution endorsing the action of changing the name from Universalist to Unitarian."

Sanborn then appears in the 1870 U.S. Federal Census as “a retired pastor,” living in the area of Rockford, Ill., and is listed in 1877 as having died in Elgin, Ill.

During his short time living in Ripon, and while working as



A BROCHURE FROM 1866-67
advertises Rufus S. Sanborn's
Steam Fire-Proof Safe as one of
the "Greatest Inventions of the
age." *submitted photo*

a pastor, Sanborn in July 1866 was granted a U.S. Patent for an improvement concept and design for personal safes.

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